



C E N T R A L C O N N E C T I C U T S T A T E U N I V E R S I T Y

Student Government Association

1615 Stanley Street, Student Center Room 211, New Britain, CT. 06050 - 4010 www.ccsu.edu/sqa

February 28, 2013

Senators Bye, Cassano and Boucher, Representatives Willis, Haddad and LeGeyt, and distinguished members of the committee:

My name is Eric Bergenn and I'm here today, on behalf of the 9,271 undergrads studying at Central Connecticut State University, and in solidarity with the nearly 100,000 students in the ConnSCU system, to speak in opposition to S.B. 844. I'm asking you, as people representing the best interest of the State of Connecticut and higher education, please, do not implement the Governor's budget recommendations. You know that there needs to be more invested in higher education and less in new incentive programs, so make that happen. You have the power to do that. That's why you're sitting where you are.

Normally, I would use this entire time to tell you about classmates of mine, like Maxie Murphy. Maxie would love to be here herself, but she works three jobs, has class from 9:00AM until 3:00PM and drives 45 minutes to CCSU every day. Or I could use this time to rattle off the numbers that are causing us such concern for our futures. Instead, because I'm sure you know the number, and you're going to hear plenty of that today anyway, I want to give you my story.

I was elected student body president for the second year last spring at CCSU and I'm here speaking for those who cannot. I'm speaking for those who are in class and I'm putting myself in danger of failing a class that I will otherwise get an "A" in to be here. I'm doing this because I realize if I don't succeed at convincing you to protect our public higher education in CT, future students are going to lose the opportunity to come back next year and make this same plea.

I put in about 30 hours a week doing classwork, 30 hours a week fulfilling my duties as president of our student body, and I work every weekend providing personal support to a family with a developmentally challenged adolescent child. I live across the street from my campus and do alright with grants and take out student loans, so I can afford to get by. I can't say that someone in my position would be able to continue to get by if state funding keeps declining and tuition keeps going up.

Imagine if tomorrow's leaders can't even afford to go to college. The person that would be here in my shoes speaking with you, begging you to consider his or her nine thousand friends couldn't afford to get an education. The person that could be part of the more than 90% of ConnSCU grads whom stay in CT, earning their wage and paying the tax dollars never gets a chance to get a good job.

This is my opportunity to beg you not to let the Governor make this mistake. I know he doesn't want to leave us by the wayside while UConn gets billions in investments. I'm sure he just overlooked the other 100,000 students in CT's higher education system, or didn't realize we're

the future of CT, too. But I think that you would hire me as quickly as any UConn student. And I think we should look out for the people who don't go to UConn or private schools because they can get a good degree from CCSU for a significantly lower price.

This budget, however, continues to drive the price of our degree up, while endangering its value. But you don't have to just let that happen. You and your fellow legislators can help fix this. You can help save CT higher education for these students and in the process guarantee a strong, skilled workforce for a strong economy in the State of Connecticut. Don't you want to be able to say that you did that? I want to be able to say that you did that.

Thank you for your time,

Eric Bergenn

President

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